

# **How to Succeed With Volunteers-In-Parks**

60-Minute Module Series

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Training Guide**

### **Handouts**

**National Park Service  
Volunteers-In-Parks Program**



## **Guide to Handouts**

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# **Director's Order #7**

## **Volunteers-In-Parks**

# **The Challenging Role of the Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) Program Manager**

The job of the VIP Program Manager can be challenging and rewarding. Often, however, the position is misunderstood with respect to the professional and personal skills needed to implement a successful program. The following points highlight some of the unique demands placed on VIP Program Managers.

- VIP Program Managers have the challenging job of managing people, but with added complications stemming from the fact that they do not have a pay check with which to reward their workers at the end of a work period. They must become experts at understanding and providing motivation for each volunteer. Thus, in many ways, they need to be more skilled as managers than those supervising salaried employees.
- VIP Program Managers are involved in a fiercely competitive market for the use of people's free time. They must have a product (volunteer jobs) so enticing that prospective volunteers would choose that activity over any other use of their free time.
- The profile of the volunteer is changing and the VIP Program Manager must be able to lead the organization to new ways of utilizing volunteer resources.
- The VIP Program Manager's job involves responsibilities both inside and outside the National Park Service. The VIP Program Manager must be adept at supervising and keeping records on many types of people, working on different schedules, at all levels of the organization.
- Good VIP Program Managers must be able to apply good volunteer management practices to their park. This requires excellent communication and training skills.
- Managing volunteers frequently involves working long and flexible hours, because many volunteer events are held outside of normal working hours.
- VIP Program Managers frequently do not get many resources, or sufficient training, to assist them in their role.
- The job of a VIP Program Manager can be a lonely one as the number of support personnel within the organization is frequently limited.

# Options for Staffing a VIP Program Manager's Position

Budgets, priorities, and staff availability (paid and volunteer) all affect an organization's choice of one of the following models for staffing the VIP Program Manager position.

1. **Full-Time Position (as VIP Program Manager)**  
This is the ideal, but only infrequently can a park afford this luxury.
2. **Full-Time Position (with other major areas of responsibility)**  
Frequently, in this situation, volunteer management is an add-on responsibility. These managers primarily see themselves in other roles, squeezing in volunteer management as time allows.
3. **Part-Time Position (with no other duties)**  
The value of this option is that the person will not be splitting time with other activities in the organization.
4. **Decentralized Model**  
Under this option, all staff members recruit and manage their own volunteers, as needed or desired. The result may be a disjointed effort, with very little quality control.
5. **Volunteer Position**  
These are difficult folks to find. They need time, skills, and dedication. The park must supply them with the necessary resources to succeed. This may be a shared position among a number of volunteers.

# **Volunteer Program Manager**

## **Sample Position Description**

### **Reports to:**

(designated administrator)

### **Supervises :**

Employee is responsible for managing the Volunteers-In-Parks program at [park name]

### **Basic function:**

Provides direction, coordination, and consultation for all volunteers throughout the park. Plans, develops, and manages the Volunteers-In-Parks program for [park name] in direct support of priority management objectives and the National Park Service Mission.

### **Duties and responsibilities (example)**

The incumbent is responsible for planning, developing, and executing all aspects of the park-wide volunteer program. S/he provides annual analysis and recommendations to for use in setting park goals and program direction. S/he provides ongoing advice, guidance, and assistance to management, law enforcement, interpretive rangers, natural resources staff and maintenance foremen, to carry out the goals and objectives of these programs.

The employee manages the park's dynamic Volunteers-In-Park program and in that role is expected to be a highly effective and professional volunteer manager. [park name] has a volunteer cadre that includes \_\_\_\_\_ VIPs who have contributed \_\_\_\_\_ hours in FY \_\_\_\_\_. Volunteers perform needed jobs in all areas of the park including natural/cultural resource management, maintenance, interpretation and administration.

A key to the success of managing the volunteer program is to maintain a wide variety of community contacts and the ability to use all forms of mass media to both inform the public about the park and to recruit volunteers. The employee serves as focal point to identify methods that will enhance the park's ability to attract volunteers through both outreach programs and recruitment efforts within and outside the local community.

# **Volunteer Rights**

## **Volunteers have the right to:**

1. Receive the same fair personnel practices as paid staff.
2. Have their time used effectively.
3. Receive clear and non-conflicting guidance and direction.
4. Be kept informed of activities pertaining to their volunteer assignments.
5. Not undertake assignments they do not wish to do.
6. Receive appropriate orientation, training, and supervision.
7. Be assigned jobs that are worthwhile and challenging.
8. Be made aware of the overall operation of the park.
9. Have opportunities for growth.
10. Be offered a variety of experiences.
11. Receive regular, clear feedback on the quality and effectiveness of their work.
12. Be recognized for their contributions.
13. Have an opportunity to provide input into the volunteer program.
14. Be trusted with the information needed to carry out their jobs effectively.
15. Be assigned a direct supervisor.

# **Volunteer Responsibilities**

## **Volunteers have the responsibility to:**

1. Represent the National Park Service in a professional manner.
2. Follow the park's policies and guidelines and understand its organizational structure.
3. Seek and accept the guidance and support needed to complete assignments.
4. Work as a team with paid staff and respect mutual roles.
5. Be reliable in fulfilling assignments.
6. Do a quality, professional job.
7. Respect access to information, facilities and equipment, etc.
8. Learn from and participate in training sessions and meetings.
9. Provide notice of absence.
10. Make a good-faith effort to resolve differences or problems.
11. Care for park resources.
12. Work safely and smartly.